Mei HaShiloach: A Commentary by Rabbi Mordechai Yosef of Isbitza

“… and G-d tested Avraham…” (Bereshit 22:1)

The test of the binding of Yitzchok (henceforth, the Akeida) was in the great faith that Avraham Avinu had in the blessed G-d. G-d had already said to him, “thus will be your progeny” and ”I will keep my covenant, with Yitzchok,” so now, when He said to him, “raise him up on the altar for a sacrifice,” even though he remembered those first things that he had been told, and did not fall (from his level of faith). It is not possible for the intelligence of man to apprehend this kind of faith. Truly, we never find the specific command of G-d telling him to slaughter his son, so therefore the verse does not say, “and YHV’H tested Avraham” (using G-d’s name of mercy), but “E-lohim tested” (G-d’s name of judgment), meaning that the Divine injunction came to him in the aspect of “a mirror which does not illuminate” (a lover level of prophecy) (Zohar Bereshit, 120b) and therefore the name “E-lohim” is used, which denotes strengths. Therefore concerning Yitzchok it was not really a test, for he believed that this was clearly what G-d wanted Avraham to do, yet for Avraham it was a great trial because he had not received a clear message from G-d. So if he were tainted in any aspect of his relationship as a father toward his son, then G-d would have obliged him to have mercy upon him. Truly, it was the direct will of G-d that he would not slaughter his son, and the trial was only to illuminate the eyes of Avraham. This is why, when he prayed for Sodom he said (Bereshit 18:27), “for I am dust and ashes,” for dust represents an action that has not been disencumbered of impurities and needs fixing. It is possible that things may grow out of the dust, where ashes represent something completely lost, G-d forbid. If he had slaughtered his son then there would not have been any way to repair the damage. Similarly with the people of Sodom, if his prayer had been effective and they lived, and then they continued in their evil ways, then it would have been like the dust from which there is no growth. Thus the blessed G-d showed him that his prayer over them had not been in vain, for as we find in the writing of the Ari”zal (Shaar HaPeshikim, Prashat Shemot) from (their souls) the generation of Israel in the desert was born.

Second Looks at the Second Day:

Shining the Light of The Binding of Isaac in Our Own Lives

Second day reading: Gen. 22:1-24

What was the test about?

After these things… Rashi

1

2

Lech lecha

Lech lecha

Avraham’s task

Lot

Yishmael

First day reading Gen. 21:1-34

“b’asher hu sham”

Yitzchak

Avraham succeeds

“Literary tension”

Not Yitzchak’s test

Sefat Emmet: So why didn’t Hashem let him do it?

Mei Shiloach

Adam

What does it mean for us?